

In the Spirit...

2017-2018 Calendar



Remembering Newark's Religious Leaders

December 2016

Abyssinian Baptist Church



Rev. Horace P. Sharper
(Courtesy of The Newark Public Library)

Abyssinian Baptist Church, originally known as Friendship Church, was formed by former members of Hopewell Baptist Church in 1917. For the first few years it was located at 117 Prince Street and then, until the early 1930s, at 315 Norfolk Street. It became Norfolk Baptist Church after a reorganization in 1939, when the Rev. Raphus P. Means was appointed pastor.

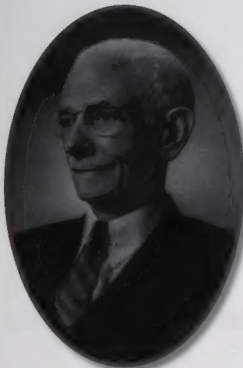
Under Rev. Means' leadership (1939-61), the church purchased a new building at 224-28 West Kinney Street which was dedicated on February 2, 1947. Rev. Means' successor was the Rev. Horace P. Sharper, a civil rights activist who was a friend of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He served as Newark's South Ward councilman from 1969-70 and helped negotiate the Newark Agreements, a pact that, in the interests of city residents, significantly decreased the amount of their land taken for construction of the University of Medicine and Dentistry.

Rev. Sharper's successor was the Rev. Ester Ivy. In tribute to his service, Broome Street eventually became Rev. Ester Ivy Boulevard. After his retirement, the Rev. Elton T. Byrd, who subsequently founded Newark's Fellowship Baptist Church, was pastor for seven years.

Since the Rev. Perry Simmons became pastor in 1982, more than 2,000 new members have joined Abyssinian and many new programs and ministries have been added. Facilities also have been made available to a Drugs Anonymous group and other community outreach programs.

January 2017

Bethany Baptist Church



Rev. William P. Hayes
(Courtesy of Bethany Baptist Church)

Bethany Baptist Church, Newark's oldest church founded by African-Americans, dates to 1871, when the founding members met in a deacon's parlor. They subsequently moved to Peddie Memorial Church in downtown Newark before establishing their own meeting place in the late 1870s in an old synagogue.

In 1901, the congregation moved into what is now referred to as Old Bethany, at 117 Market Street. The current building at 275 West Market Street, noted for its African design, was erected on a three-acre site in 1976 for \$2 million. A \$6 million addition includes an elementary school.

Bethany's former pastors include the late Rev. William P. Hayes, a community advocate for whom the Newark Housing Authority named Hayes Homes, a public housing complex in the Central Ward that has since been demolished. His successor, the Rev. Dr. James A. Scott, served as Bethany's pastor for more than three decades.

Over the years, Bethany was been a hub of civic activity. It was the birthplace of both the Newark Branch of the NAACP and Essex County Urban League chapter and sponsored an AIDS crisis program for many years. Its popular Jazz Vespers concert series (the brainchild of the Rev. Dr. M. William Howard Jr., pastor from 2000-15) is a Saturday night fixture in the church sanctuary. The current pastor, the Rev. Timothy Levi. Jones, was installed in 2016.

February 2017

Beulah Baptist Church

Beulah Baptist Church, 580-84 South 12th Street in Newark, was organized in 1939 by Deacon and Mrs. James Walker, Mrs. E. Brown and Mrs. Viola Kelly in whose home on Bedford Street the members first met. The Rev. O.E. Kelly was the first pastor. From 1945-50, when the New Jersey Housing Authority took over their property, a storefront on Lewis Street served as the church home.

In 1950, the church moved to 38 Charlton Street. Two years later the Rev. J.C. Crawford, then newly ordained, became the pastor. Before his ordination, he belonged to Zion Hill Baptist Church in Newark.

For many years, Rev. Crawford also hosted a Sunday ministry on WNJR radio. As a means of attracting new members to his church, he installed speakers outside the building to allow passersby to share the word of the Gospel.

On April 19, 1967, Rev. Crawford led the congregation on a march from Charlton Street to the site of their present home on South 12th Street. More than 125 people participated. Soon after, he became a member of Newark's Model Cities Commission under Mayor Kenneth A. Gibson.

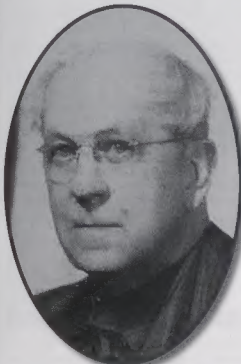
Rev. Crawford passed away on October 28, 1989. Under his successor, the Rev. Gerald Lydell Dickson, the church became known as Beulah Bible Cathedral Church. As part of Rev. Dickson's ministry, church leaders often take to the streets to assist those in need of spiritual direction and encourage them to attend church services.



Rev. J. C. Crawford
(Courtesy of The Newark Public Library)

March 2017

Blessed Sacrament/St. Charles Borromeo



Rev. Frederick C. O'Neill
(Courtesy of Seton Hall University Library)

Blessed Sacrament Church dates to 1902 when Bishop John O'Connor of the Archdiocese of Newark directed the Rev. Joseph C. Dunn, pastor of St. Leo's Church in Irvington, to create a Roman Catholic parish in the Clinton Hill section of Newark. Father Dunn bought the three-acre Schwartz estate at Clinton Place and Millington Avenue where ground was broken for a small frame building on August 14, 1903.

Blessed Sacrament's first pastor was the Rev. Frederick C. O'Neill who served the parish from 1905 until 1951. As the parish continued to grow and the little frame church became too small for the congregation, he purchased property at Clinton Avenue and Van Ness Place, where Blessed Sacrament opened in 1913. St. Charles Borromeo Church, constructed at Custer and Peshine avenues on a parcel Rev. O'Neill purchased in 1909, opened in 1910. The first pastor there was the Rev. Thomas A. Walsh.

Following a change of demographics in the 1980s and 1990s, Blessed Sacrament and St. Charles Borromeo merged. Services and church activities were consolidated at Blessed Sacrament, 610 Clinton Avenue, with the Rev. Paul Schetelick as pastor. St. Charles Borromeo closed and was later occupied by Greater Friendship Baptist Church.

The Blessed Sacrament convent at 620 Clinton Avenue eventually became a Catholic elementary school. It currently is occupied by a charter school.

In 2001 the Rev. Anselm Nwaorgu was installed as Blessed Sacrament's pastor. In 2009 he was elevated to the rank of monsignor. His emphasis has been on communal worship.

April 2017

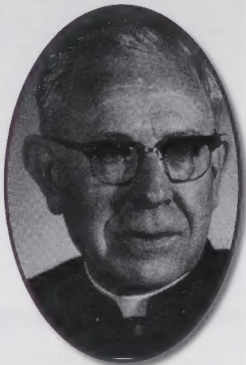
Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart

The Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart at 89 Ridge Street in Newark, adjacent to Branch Brook Park, is the fifth largest cathedral in North America. The original design called for an English-Irish Gothic Revival church, but plans were modified in favor of a French Gothic Revival style.

Construction of the cathedral began in 1899, when the cornerstone was laid, and completed in 1954. Bishop Thomas J. Walsh opened the cathedral on March 1, 1928 even though work on it was still incomplete. The first ordination was his own as Bishop of Newark, an event attended by more than 4,000 people.

The cathedral was dedicated on October 19, 1954 by Archbishop Thomas Boland. As part of the service, he received the pallium, a woolen vestment conferred by the Pope, from then Archbishop Amleto Giovanni Cicognani, the Vatican's delegate to the United States. The Rev. Msgr. Joseph A. Doyle, who spent his entire priestly life in the parish, was the cathedral's first rector. Thousands came to celebrate his Golden Jubilee in 1972.

During his visit to the United States in 1974, Pope John Paul II celebrated evening prayer at the cathedral. As part of that service he elevated it to a basilica, a pilgrimage site. Since then it has been known as the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart. Concerts featuring the largest pipe organ ever built by the Schantz Organ Company are held throughout the year.

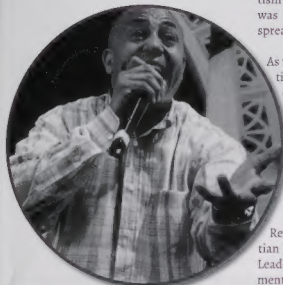


Msgr. Joseph A. Doyle
(Courtesy of Seton Hall University Library)

May 2017

Christian Love Baptist Church

To the Newark community and beyond, the Rev. Ronald B. Christian, pastor of Christian Love Baptist Church, was a dynamic young man of God whose magnetism attracted more than 3,000 members to his flock. As a man of the cloth, he was unconventional to say the least, wearing jeans and dancing in the aisles as he spread the Gospel.



Rev. Ronald B. Christian
(Courtesy of Rev. William E. Christian)

As the son of the Rev. William E. Christian, pastor of Newark's New Antioch Baptist Church for 20 years, Rev. Ron was called to the ministry at age 14 and licensed to preach in 1998. Before assuming the pastorate at Christian Love in 2001, he served as youth pastor at Clear View Baptist Church in Newark under the Rev. Eric Beckham.

Rev. Ron was an inspiration to all, especially young people, because he readily acknowledged his mistakes of the past. Those who had committed serious crimes often were drawn to him for spiritual advice and to act as their go-between with police. The sign outside his church said it all: "Sinners Welcome."

Rev. Ron held a master's degree in divinity and theological studies from the Christian Bible Seminary and graduated from the Harvard University School of Divinity Leadership Institute. He also attended the Seton Hall University Graduate Department of Judeo-Christian Studies. He was a member of the Newark Board of Education's School Management Team and served as chaplain for Beth Israel Medical Center, the Essex County Youth Detention Center and several other agencies.

To the dismay of his church family and his friends the world over, he passed away suddenly in October 2015. More than 4,000 people attended his funeral service. He was 51.

June 2017

Clinton Memorial AME Zion Church

Clinton Memorial African Methodist Episcopalian (AME) Zion Church, founded in 1822, is the oldest African-American congregation in New Jersey. Its members have occupied an historic Gothic church at 151 Broadway since 1929.

Designed by noted architect William Apple Potter, the building originally was home to the Belleville Avenue Congregational Church whose members worshiped there until 1927 when it was sold to the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church. Two years later it was sold again to Clinton Memorial, which had moved from one location to another for more than the first 100 years of its existence before settling on Broadway.

The pastor at the time was the Rev. Jeremiah M. Hoggard, who made Clinton Memorial one of Newark's most progressive houses of worship. In 1931, Rev. Hoggard was succeeded by the Rev. Dr. James Canty Nelson, who liquidated the church debt and put an end to a century-old pattern of the congregation wandering from location to location. Dr. Nelson died in 1963 after serving Clinton Memorial for 33 years.

In 1986, Clinton Memorial was named to the National Register of Historic Places. In 1998, the Rev. Frances Murray-Williams became the pastor, the first woman appointed to a major pulpit in her denomination's history. The Rev. Dr. William McKenith, who became pastor in 2006, established a two-year training program in the Christian ministry for the clergy and laity which has produced 35 graduates. The current pastor is the Rev. Robert H. Taylor Sr.



Rev. James Canty Nelson

(Courtesy of Clinton Memorial AME Zion Church)

July 2017

First Presbyterian Church of Newark (Old First Church)



Rev. Abraham Pierson Jr.

First Presbyterian Church of Newark, also known as Old First Church, is the oldest church in New Jersey. It was founded by Puritans from Connecticut soon after they arrived on the banks of the Passaic River in 1666. As Newark's first meeting house, Old First was the center of all civic, social and religious activity in what was then a village. A second meeting house was constructed in 1715.

Originally, First Presbyterian was a Congregational church pastored by the Rev. Abraham Pierson Sr. who was born in England in 1639 and is believed buried in an unknown plot in Newark. His son, the Rev. Abraham Pierson Jr., who assisted his father at the church from 1678 until the elder Pierson's death, succeeded him and served as pastor until 1694. He then became rector of a school in New Haven that became Yale University. Aaron Burr, whose son was vice president, was another early church leader. He founded the College of New Jersey.

Construction of the present church building at 820 Broad Street began under the stewardship of the Rev. Alexander McWhorter who fled Newark in the midst of a British invasion during the Revolutionary War. It was completed under the Rev. Edward D. Griffin (1801-09), who later became president of Williams College. The Rev. Jonathan F. Stearns, who supported Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War, wrote the first church history. In the following years, succeeding pastors established a tradition of great music in the church, instituted a worldwide radio ministry and refurbished the sanctuary. Among other missions, the Rev. Glen C. Miseck, Old First's current pastor, has placed an emphasis on community outreach. He is the first African American to head the congregation.

August 2017

Greater Abyssinian Baptist Church

Greater Abyssinian Baptist Church was founded by the Rev. Raphus P. Means following a meeting in 1961 at the Newark home of gospel great Alex Bradford. In 1970, the Rev. Matthew Augustus Zimmerman, who had served Corinth Baptist Church in his home state of South Carolina for twenty-nine years, replaced Rev. Means as Greater Abyssinian's pastor.

Under Rev. Zimmerman's leadership, the congregation moved from its original home at 261 Hunterdon to the newly renovated building it currently occupies at 88 Lyons Avenue. Over the opposition of members who wanted to move to the suburbs, Rev. Zimmerman insisted that the church remain in Newark. The first worship service in the new edifice took place May 24, 1976.

Rev. Zimmerman was well known throughout the Newark community for his humanitarian efforts, especially in aiding the homeless and hungry. When five Angolan refugees who lost their limbs during civil unrest in their country arrived in Newark, members of his church raised more than \$1,000 to help pay their medical expenses.

Rev. Zimmerman was vice president of the North Jersey Baptist School of Religion and moderator of the North Jersey District Missionary Baptist Association. Following a lengthy illness, he retired from the ministry shortly before his death in 1999 at age 84. The Rev. Allen S. Potts, who succeeded Rev. Zimmerman, came to Greater Abyssinian from Mount Zion Baptist Church in Newark to carry on the mission to help those in need.



Rev. Matthew J. Zimmerman
(Courtesy of The Newark Public Library)

September 2017

Hopewell Baptist Church



Rev. Boyd B. Cantrell

Hopewell Baptist Church was founded in 1916, the year after the stately building at the foot of Martin Luther King Boulevard that it has occupied for more than a half century was built by Temple B'nai B'rith. Hopewell's members, who gathered initially at the home of the Burks family, included many professionals and entrepreneurs.

In its early years, Hopewell moved from rental site to rental site—a storefront here, an attic there. The move to its present location after the turn of the 20th century provided the congregation a permanent new home. The one-time Jewish synagogue of Moorish design, features a green dome and two flanking towers on the outside and a 100-foot high sanctuary, library, auditorium and religious school space.

In the 1960s, Hopewell was at the forefront of the civil rights movement in Newark. The Rev. Dr. Boyd B. Cantrell, the pastor, was president of the Newark Branch NAACP and an activist against racism in local government. During the 1967 civil disturbances, his demeanor was considered an important calming effect. Rev. Cantrell also served as chaplain for Essex County and several area hospitals. Rev. Cantrell, who pastored churches in New Jersey and Georgia for 50 years, passed away in 2001 at age 79. Dr. Jason C. Garce, another community activist, has led the congregation since then.

October 2017

Metropolitan Baptist Church

Metropolitan Baptist Church was founded in January 1938 in Newark's old Third Ward. The congregation originally was known as Mt. Moriah Mission. In February 1939, the Rev. Matthew Waters was installed as the first pastor, and in February 1940 a cornerstone was laid for a new building at 32-34 Prince Street, off Springfield Avenue.

In April 1944 following Rev. Waters' death the Rev. Benjamin Franklin B.F. Johnson Sr. accepted the call as pastor and took over the leadership of the church. By then, the membership had grown to nearly 1,400 and the mortgage on the church building was nearly paid off.

Rev. Johnson went on to serve Metropolitan for 48 years, becoming one of the of the nation's most revered religious leaders. He served as chairman of the Home Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention and president of the New England Baptist Convention. He also was a member of the North Jersey District Association of Baptist Churches and founding member of the Newark North Jersey Committee of Black Churchmen.

He invested the final years of his life bringing plans to fruition for a new \$6.7 million church building on Springfield Avenue, but did not live to see its dedication. He died fifteen months before the opening of the new church at the age of 95. His successor the Rev. David Jefferson, has spearheaded Metropolitan's growth to the point where it now has more than 5,000 members. He also has introduced many new ministries.



Rev. Benjamin F. Johnson Sr.

November 2017

Moorish Science Temple of America - Nation of Islam



Ali K. Muhammad

The earliest evidence of Islamic worship in Newark dates to 1913 when the Moorish Science Temple of America was founded by Noble Drew Ali. After Ali's death in Chicago in 1929, the organization splintered. While one faction remained loyal to the teachings of Ali, another followed Wallace Fard Muhammad, founder of the Nation of Islam.

Wallace Fard Muhammad's successor was Elijah Muhammad, who led the Nation of Islam from 1934 until his death in 1975. In 1976, Warith Deen Muhammad, Elijah Muhammad's son, transformed the original Nation of Islam into an orthodox Islamic movement.

In the 1960s, when African American opposition to racial discrimination surged, the Islamic presence in Newark often centered on Temple 25 on South Orange Avenue, where the spiritual leader was Minister James Shabazz. Under Imam Abdul Akbar Muhammad, a new masjid (temple) has been built on that site and the Clara Muhammad School reopened. The new masjid is named for Ali K. Muhammad who led Masjid Muhammad until his passing.

Others followers of Elijah Muhammad, including many Newarkers, sought the leadership of Louis Farrakhan, an African American religious and social leader, who reopened 130 Nation of Islam mosques worldwide in the early 1980s. He retains close ties to the Newark-based Women in Support of the Million Man March led by Sister Fredrica Bey.

Malcolm X Shabazz High School on Johnson Avenue, originally known as South Side High School, is named for Malcolm X, another revered Muslim leader.

December 2017

Mount Zion Baptist Church

Mount Zion Baptist church, under the direction of the Rev. William Hul, was founded in 1878 by thirty-two members who withdrew from Bethany Baptist Church. They worshiped first at East Kinney Street Hall until 1885, then purchased and renovated a small schoolhouse owned by the Sherman Avenue Baptist Church in Newark's East Ward. A new edifice on Thomas Street, opposite the schoolhouse, was dedicated on January 3, 1886. During the pastorate of the Rev. Meschack Coleman that building was demolished and a more modern church erected on the same site.

Mount Zion's membership greatly increased under the leadership of the Rev. I. R. Brown, pastor from 1905 until his death in 1933. Members of the congregation included Ada and Jake Vaughan, whose daughter Sarah won legendary fame as a jazz singer. Under Rev. Brown, ground was broken for a larger new building that was dedicated in 1917.

Under the leadership of the Rev. James H. Burks (1934-54), the congregation decided to expand once more. Some members, however, were against a move to larger quarters and voted to remain at Thomas Street under the name First Mount Zion Baptist Church. Others took over the former Park Presbyterian Church at 208 Broadway.

In 1954, the Rev. Homer Tucker, whose ministry focused on social service and racial integration, became pastor. He was succeeded by the Rev. Granville A. Steward (1968-2006) and the Rev. Gloria White who has led the congregation since 2007.



Rev. Homer Tucker

January 2018

Mt. Calvary Baptist Church



Rev. J. Wendell Mapson

Mt. Calvary Baptist Church had 2,500 members when the Rev. J. Wendell Mapson spearheaded construction of a new church building at Seymour and Hawthorne avenues in the late 1950s. One of his biggest obstacles was overcoming the opposition of white residents who lived in the area. But he was not deterred by the pressure and the \$500,000 edifice was completed in 1958.

Rev. Mapson's devotion to the neighboring community was evident from the day the church doors opened. During the course of his ministry he launched a food pantry, created a scholarship fund ministry, and opened a day care center for pre-school children. As a pioneer in the housing field, he also oversaw the construction of Mt. Calvary Homes - 232 units of affordable housing that went up in 1967.

Rev. Mapson began his ministry in his home state of Alabama and came to Mt. Calvary in 1947 - at a time when his congregation was worshipping in a former synagogue. His focus then and throughout his tenure as pastor, was building and rebuilding black family life with all its attendant needs. To that end, he organized the congregation into service groups designed to foster spiritual growth among them.

As a young preacher he became a friend of the Rev. Martin Luther King Sr., father of the civil rights leader. In 1968, he brought Rev. King Jr., the dean of the civil rights movement, to Newark, to visit, just days before King was assassinated in Memphis.

Rev. Mapson retired from Mt. Calvary in 1998. He was 99 when he died in 1999. His successor, the Rev. Ralph M. Branch Jr., is a product of Mt. Calvary.

February 2018

New Eden Baptist Church

The Rev. John H. Shorter founded New Eden Baptist Church in 1965 and served as pastor for 25 years. Services were originally held in the basement of his home on Littleton Avenue in Newark and in a storefront until the building at 690 South 12th Street, where members still worship, was purchased in 1969.

Earlier in his life, Rev. Shorter became a deacon and served as chairman of the deacon board at Tabernacle Baptist Church in Newark under the leadership of the Rev. William Irving. Rev. Shorter became an ordained minister at age 47 at New Antioch Baptist Church, where he later served as minister for five years.

As a founding member of the Newark-North Jersey Black Churchmen, a group comprised of nearly 200 clergymen, Rev. Shorter served as chairman of the organization's Back to God Crusade Committee. He also was the driving force behind the group's Crusade Choir and chairman of its Martin Luther King Committee.

Because of his love of young people, Rev. Shorter was known in church circles as "Preacher Daddy." The wall of his office, in fact, was covered with pictures of children who were members of his "club."

Shortly before he passed away in 1989 at the age of 79, Rev. Shorter appointed the Rev. Dr. Bernard W. Savage, a church member who was his protégé, as New Eden's co-pastor. Rev. Savage has pastored the church for more than 25 years, continuing Rev. Shorter's mission to serve the congregation and save souls. The John H. Shorter Concert Choir is named for New Eden's founding pastor.



Rev. John H. Shorter

March 2018

New Hope Baptist Church



Rev. Charles E. Thomas

Courtesy of The Newark

New Hope Baptist Church, 107 Sussex Avenue, dates to 1903 when members met in a private home on Drift Street in Newark. The early pastors included the Rev. Terry Redd (1908-36) and the Rev. C.H. Walters (1937-66).

Rev. Charles E. Thomas was called to New Hope in 1957 and was installed as pastor on August 6, 1968, marking the beginning of an era that saw the development of the New Hope Day Care Center and the reorganization of the church scholarship fund.

Rev. Thomas also developed the Minority Contractors and Craftsmen Trade Association and the New Hope Skills Centers, programs that trained workers in carpentry, masonry and machinery operations to enable them to pursue careers in these fields.

In 1975, he organized the New Hope Development Corporation, which was responsible for building New Hope Village, a 170-unit affordable housing complex in the center city. He also created programs to address issues including teen pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse and the incarceration of African American men and women. In the mid 1980s, during Rev. Thomas's tenure, a \$2.5 million all-brick church building was constructed with the help of singer Whitney Houston, who grew up in New Hope. Her mother, Cissy Houston, a former choir director, and other family members have longtime ties to the church.

After serving New Hope for more than three decades, Rev. Thomas retired in 1993 after selecting the Rev. Joe Carter, a young preacher from Oklahoma, as his successor. Rev. Thomas passed away in 2005.

April 2018

Queen of Angels Church

Queen of Angels Church, founded in 1930, was the center of African American Catholicism in the city for many years. Nevertheless, the church building was closed by the Archdiocese of Newark several years ago and demolished in 2016.

Constructed by German Catholics as St. Peter's Church, the building on Irving Turner Boulevard (Belmont Avenue) at Morton Street became home to Queen of Angels in 1962. In 1972, it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Queen of Angels history dates to 1916 when Etnel Wright began teaching catechism in her home. The foundation for a black apostolate was furthered by the work of Sister Peter Claver of the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity, and the Rev. Cornelius Ahern, director of the archdiocese's Mission to the Colored, who became Queen of Angels' first pastor. Peak periods of church activity were from 1930-40 under Father Ahern and from 1958-70 under Msgr. Thomas P. Carey.

Both Father Ahern and Msgr. Carey emphasized respect for all people and strong involvement of the laity in church operations. In its quest for racial harmony following the 1967 civil disturbances in Newark, Queen of Angels helped organize a Day of Understanding at the behest of Willie Wright, a black Catholic. The event attracted more than 25,000 people, both black and white, who marched through Newark's Central Ward. In the aftermath, the Msgr. William J. Linder, an assistant pastor, and members from Queen of Angels, founded the New Community Corporation, a non-profit agency that has since rebuilt much of the Newark's center city.



Msgr. Thomas P. Carey

May 2018

Revival Temple Holiness Church Center of Deliverance



Bishop Jeff W. Banks

Revival Temple Holiness Church Center of Deliverance was founded by the late Bishop Jeff W. Banks in 1965. After worshipping at his home and at the Newark YWCA, the congregation, which is affiliated with the Church of God in Christ, eventually moved to its permanent home at 81-85 16th Avenue.

Bishop Banks and his brother, the Rev. Charles Banks, the founder of Greater Harvest Baptist Church in Newark, were well known gospel singers, who recorded as the Banks Brothers and provided the inspiration for the popular Back Home Choir. They were the first gospel duo to sign with a major label (Savoy) and won a gold record for their rendition of "Lord, I Tried."

During the course of a long career, the Banks Brothers sang at the Newport Jazz Festival, Carnegie Hall and Madison Square Garden. As a young man, Bishop Banks played piano for Mahalia Jackson. In 1989, he and his brother were inducted into the Gospel Hall of Fame.

In 1974, Bishop Banks created the Revival Temple Mass Choir, which recorded ten albums and hit the Top 10 charts under his direction. Although confined to bed during the final years of his life, he continued to minister to his flock from his home. He died January 31, 1997.

Bishop Banks' successor, the Rev. Gregory Alan Woods, came to Newark from Atlanta, Georgia and was installed as pastor of Revival Temple on August 9, 1998. During his tenure, the church has undergone several renovations to accommodate its growing membership.

June 2018

St. James, AME Church

Members of St. James African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church at Martin Luther King Boulevard and Court Street worship in an historic Gothic edifice erected in 1850 by architect John Welch. It was originally known as the High Street Presbyterian Church.

After the Presbyterian congregation disbanded, Bethel AME Church -- subsequently St. James -- took over the building in 1926. During its 90 year history many noteworthy pastors, including the Rev. Dr. William D. Watley, who led St. James for 26 years and is now the senior pastor at the historic St. Philip AME Church in Atlanta, have served the congregation.

In 1984, the Right Rev. Vernon R. Byrd, who became an ordained preacher as a teenager, had the distinction of being called from the pulpit of St. James to be consecrated as the 105th bishop of the AME church. Over the years he served as pastor and presiding elder at churches in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Bermuda.

Among many honors, Bishop Byrd was recognized as an honorary member of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II for helping to bring order to the Bermuda Isles during a period of civil unrest in 1964. In 1994, he received an honorary degree from Payne Theological Seminary. Bishop Byrd died on May 6, 2009, in Charlotte, North Carolina. He was 77.

The Rev. Ronald Slaughter, who has led St. James since mid-2011, is the youngest pastor in the history of the church. He is scheduled to receive his doctorate from Wesley Theological Seminary in 2018.



Bishop Vernon R. Byrd

July 2018

St. John's Church



Msgr. John P. Hourihan

For the past half century members of St. John's Church of the Archdiocese of Newark aided by a faithful crew of volunteers have fed the poor and homeless each day at noon, a practice initiated by the late Msgr. John P. Hourihan after he became pastor in 1977. Estimates put the number of meals served at millions.

The construction of St. John's, which has undergone various renovations through the years began in 1827. At that time, the church was part of the newly established Archdiocese of Newark and the only Catholic house of worship in North Jersey. In 1972 it was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Father Hourihan devoted most of his priestly life to caring for homeless people and people with disabilities, especially the deaf. As part of that mission he established the Archdiocesan Diagnostic Center and four satellite centers for people with speech and hearing disorders. In addition to the feeding program, he opened the church doors to struggling artists who held exhibits there and celebrated many masses for FBI agents and officers of the New Jersey State Police.

Among other activities, he served as president of the Newark Priests Association and Priests Senate of the Archdiocese and was vice chairman of the International Catholic Foundation for the Deaf. On a broader plane, he represented the State of New Jersey at White House conferences and was a member of President John F. Kennedy's Advisory Committee on Teacher Training. After his retirement he filled in as chaplain at Ft. Monmouth. He died on September 10, 2008 at the age of 84.

August 2018

St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church

St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church was founded in 1905 by a group of newly arrived immigrants who worshiped in a downtown apartment at Washington and Market streets. The first church building, at 129 Academy Street, opened in 1909. Services were held there until 1924 when a stately Byzantine building which became the first Greek Orthodox Church in New Jersey was built on High Street (Martin Luther King Boulevard) opposite Arts High School.

Rev. George Spiridakis, who spearheaded the growth of the congregation and move to High Street, served as pastor from 1918 until 1954 when he was succeeded by the Very Rev. James Aloupis, a familiar figure in the Newark community until his retirement in 2003. He passed away in 2006 at age 88.

Because of his outgoing personality, Father Aloupis was known throughout Newark as the "Agape" priest, showering loving words on everyone he met. He was recognized for his "interfaith bridge building" by B'nai Brith and the National Conference of Christians and Jews and served also as a mentor and volunteer with organizations including the Boys Clubs of America.

Father Aloupis was elevated to Proto-Presbyter in 1967 and Archdiocese Vicar of New Jersey the following year. In 1969 he was appointed Proto-Presbyter of the Ecumenical Throne by Patriarch Athenagoras I. Since Father Aloupis's passing, St. Nicholas Church has relocated to Roseland and is known now as St. Nicholas and Constantine and Helen Greek Church.



Very Rev. James Aloupis

September 2018

Tabernacle Baptist Church



Rev. William Irving

The Rev. William Irving became the fourth pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church in 1944 after incorporating what was then the Tabernacle Mission. Under his leadership for the next 54 years the membership grew from 40 to 300 plus members.

Founded in 1937, Tabernacle was originally known as Community Baptist Church. After worshipping on Over Street from 1942-44, the members moved to 19-21 Bruce Street in the Central Ward where they spent the next 21 years. In 1967, urban renewal prompted another move to 675 South 20th Street, the church's home since then.

According to Rev. Irving, his call to the ministry began at an early age when he began building cardboard pulpits in his backyard. Before becoming a clergyman he sang in a gospel quartet.

Through the years, Rev. Irving served as an inspiration to many young men who eventually devoted their lives to the ministry. Their numbers include the Rev. John H. Shorter, one of Tabernacle's first deacons, the Rev. George Blackwell III, pastor of Newark's Good Neighbor Baptist Church, and the Rev. Jeffrey Bryan who became Tabernacle's pastor in 1998 and served until recently.

In 2013, Rev. Bryan ordained the Rev. Ernestine Jackson and the Rev. Sharonda R. Strothers—the first two female preachers in the history of the church and in the history of the New Hope Missionary Baptist Association. Rev. Strothers is now Tabernacle's interim pastor.

October 2018

Temple B'nai Jeshurun/Temple B'nai Abraham

Temple B'nai Jeshurun founded in Newark in 1848, was the first Jewish synagogue in New Jersey. By the Civil War it was large enough and its members affluent enough to build a stately Moorish style synagogue on High Street. Since 1968 when B'nai Jeshurun moved to Short Hills, it has been home to Hopewell Baptist Church. Members of both houses of worship have maintained close ties ever since.

During the early 20th century which has been called the Golden Age of Jewry in Newark, B'nai Jeshurun's membership included some of the city's most prominent residents among them Louis Bamberger, the department store magnate and his brother-in-law, Felix Fuld. The late Dr. Ely Pilchuk, a past president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis served the congregation from 1941 to 81. At his retirement he was named senior rabbi, a title later bestowed on Rabbi Barry Greene, a spiritual leader at B'nai Jeshurun from 1959 to 2005.

Rabbi Joachim Prinz, who devoted much of his life to the American civil rights movement, helped organize the 1963 March on Washington. He became the spiritual leader of Temple B'nai Abraham in Newark at 621 Clinton Avenue after fleeing Nazi Germany as a young man and eventually became president of the American Jewish Congress. During the last decade of his religious service (1939-77), B'nai Abraham moved to Livingston.

Newark's Jewish population eventually peaked at 80,000. Today, the only active temple in the city is Ahavas Shalom, 145 Broadway, which has been at its present location since the early 1920s. It is New Jersey's oldest operating synagogue and the home of the Jewish Museum of New Jersey.



Rabbi Joachim Prinz

November 2018

Trinity & St. Philip's Cathedral



Canon Dillard Robinson III

Trinity & St. Philip's Cathedral, the seat of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark, resulted from a merger between Trinity Cathedral, which was founded by colonists as one of Newark's oldest houses of worship, and St. Philip's Church on High Street which served a predominantly black congregation.

The merger came about in 1966, two years after St. Philip's Church at High and West Market streets was destroyed by fire. In doing so it brought together the strong traditions of Anglican and African worship. St. Philip's name was added to Trinity in 1992. Cathedral status was bestowed in 1994.

Trinity's congregation dates to 1729. The first church building, erected on Military Park in 1743, was replaced in 1810 after being ravaged by fire. During the Revolutionary War, it was a hospital. The building was enlarged in 1857. A century later, it became a catalyst for social change in the wake of Newark's 1967 civil disturbances. It was where the first conference for black empowerment was held, and where, in 1969, the late Canon Dillard Robinson III became the first African-American dean of any Episcopal diocese. Under Bishop John Shelby Spong (1979-2000), who advocated against the war in Vietnam and worked for the ordination of women and gay and lesbian clergy, it also became a lightning rod for controversy.

In 1998, members of the congregation founded St. Philip's Academy, a private school that has since become a charter school. Canon Petero Sabune, who spearheaded the school's founding, recently returned to Newark as the cathedral's interim pastor.

December 2018

Unity-Freedom Baptist Church

Unity Freedom Baptist Church was founded and organized by the Rev. Dr. Isaac Martin Jr. The meeting at which the church was established took place on August 29, 1971 at Rev. Martin's home at 355 Keer Avenue in Newark. Twenty-nine charter members were present including Deacon Edward Howell, who suggested the name for the church.

Members of Unity Freedom met for a short time at Good Neighbor Baptist Church, which is now located on Chancellor Avenue, then moved to 434 14th Avenue, the church home until 1972. The present edifice at 739 South 20th Street is the former home of the Ukrainian Assemblies of God and Christ.

Under Rev. Martin's leadership, the church mortgage was burned twelve years after the move to South 20th Street. During his tenure he developed many programs within the church and for the benefit of the community, including a federal food distribution program during the 1970s.

In the 1960s, Rev. Martin operated the Friendly Fuld Neighborhood House where youngsters from the Scudder Homes public housing complex in Newark came for homework assistance and recreational activities. For many years he was principal of Montgomery Street School which served children with behavioral or emotional problems.

Rev. Martin passed away on December 1, 1995. Today, Unity Freedom is shepherded by his son, the Rev. Cornelius Wesley Martin, and his wife, First Lady, Versey Martin. His mother, Bernice Martin, is First Lady Emeritus.



Rev. Isaac Martin, Jr.

January 2019

Wells Cathedral Church of God in Christ Tabernacle



Bishop Chandler David Owens Sr.

Bishop Chandler David Owens Sr. was consecrated Bishop of New Jersey's Third Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction while serving as pastor of Wells Cathedral Church of God in Christ (COGIC) Tabernacle, 672 Martin Luther King Boulevard in Newark.

Bishop Owens' ministry, which spanned seven decades, dates to his youth when he acted as junior pastor at his father's church in Alabama and served as an adjutant to the church founder.

When his parents could not afford to send him to college he became a self-educated man, spending copious amounts of time at the library devouring dictionaries, thesauruses, encyclopedias and books on a wealth of subjects. He also was a gifted speaker, considered by many as "The Man With a Golden Voice."

In 1976, he became the youngest bishop elected to the Church of God in Christ's General Board, a position he held until his death. Because of his work in Newark and commitment to the community, Mayor Sharpe James declared October 26, 2000 Bishop Chandler Owens Day.

During his long tenure as a member of the COGIC church hierarchy, Bishop Owens established the C.H. Mason Theological Bible Institute and created the Whole Truth newsletter, later the Whole Truth magazine.

After leaving Wells Cathedral, where the Rev. Dr. Hersey L. Taylor is the current pastor, Bishop Owens pastored the Greater Community Church of God in Christ in Marietta, Georgia for 19 years. He passed away on March 6, 2011 at the age of 79.

Spiritual Alliances



Dr. Edward Verner
Pastor, Newark's Paradise Baptist Church

Beyond Newark's churches and temples, several religiously oriented groups have devoted themselves to meeting the spiritual needs and improving the lives of Newark residents.

The Newark Essex Black Churchmen, for example, was founded by the late Rev. Dr. Edward Verner in the 1960s. It is currently headed by Bishop Jethro James, pastor of Newark's Paradise Baptist Church.

Dr. Verner was an ordained minister and senior associate pastor at St. James African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church as well as a well-known gynecologist in Newark for many years. In his ministerial role, he also founded the Black Ministers Council of New Jersey. As a physician, he took his practice to the people, paying weekly visits to Broad and Market streets to check the health of passersby. His concerns for the poor and uninsured also led him to found Interfaith Healing Services, which provided free health services to local churches and community events.

Another group, the Newark Interfaith Alliance, created under the leadership of Ras J. Baraka, Newark's current mayor, is spearheaded by the Rev. Louise Scott Rountree, who heads the city's Office of Clergy Affairs. She is associate pastor at Good Neighbor Baptist Church.

The interfaith alliance consists of imams, pastors, priests, bishops, rabbis, elders and ministers who work together on community engagement efforts and sponsor programs that uplift Newark's people. In March 2015, members of the group took to the streets of every ward of the city to restore lives and spirits and to foster the theme of togetherness.

Worship services also take place at The Salvation Army, which has four service centers in the city and operates a thrift shop and Goodwill Industries, a faith-based organization that has offered a variety of services for the homeless and downtrodden people of Newark and Essex County.



Rev. Louise Scott Rountree
Associate Pastor, Good Neighbor Baptist Church

History of Newark Churches



Old First Presbyterian Church
Courtesy of The Newark Armory

Like many American cities, Newark, New Jersey is faith-based, founded as a theocracy in 1666 by a band of Connecticut Puritans. In the early days, church services took place in the town meeting house, the center of all activities including political gatherings and social events.

Old First Presbyterian, a handsome stone structure at 820 Broad Street, is Newark's oldest church, dating to the city's founding. In Newark's early days, it was a Congregational church, led by the Rev. Abraham Pierson Sr., one of the city's founders.

The Episcopal House of Prayer at Broad and State streets dates to around 1710. The rectory, known as Plame House, was the home of Hannibal Goodwin, a priest and inventor. It has become one of New Jersey's most endangered landmarks. Members of Trinity Church on Military Park, also an Episcopal house of worship, first met in 1729. The first church building, a small stone structure on Military Park, was erected in 1743 and rebuilt in 1810 after being destroyed by fire.

Newark's first Baptist congregation, a group that broke away from the Lyons Farm Church near the Elizabeth border, and a Methodist group that opened Wesley Chapel on Halsey Street, also originated in the early 1800s. The city's first Catholic congregation was organized in 1826 when Irish workers on the Morris Canal laid plans for St. John's

on Mulberry Street. The church was dedicated in 1828. In 1834, Newark became home to a small Universalist congregation that has since vanished.

In 1837, Grace Church was founded as the standard-bearer for Anglican Catholic members of the Episcopal Church. The Gothic Revival edifice at 950 Broad Street was designed by Richard Upjohn and erected in 1848 at 820 Broad Street. Organist Samuel A. Ward, a prominent member of the church, wrote the melody for "America the Beautiful."

South Park Presbyterian Church on Lincoln Park, a prime example of Greek Revival architecture, opened in 1855. It was where President Abraham Lincoln delivered a speech from its steps during his visit to Newark in 1861. The church eventually became a refuge for the homeless but failed to reopen after being partially destroyed by fire in 1992.

Members of North Reformed Church, 510 Broad Street (originally known as Third Reformed Church), began meeting in 1856, initially at the home of Joseph Bradley who became a United States Supreme Court justice. Other prominent members of the church, which is known for its towering steeple, include United States Senator Frederick Frelinghuysen.

St. Patrick Pro-Cathedral, 91 Washington Street, another Catholic church, dates to the mid 19th Century. Between 1846 and 1860, more than twenty churches went up throughout the city. Many of them served a variety of German immigrant faiths—Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic and Hebrew.

Bnai Jeshurun, the first Jewish congregation in Newark and the second in New Jersey, was incorporated in 1848. After renting space for a decade and worshipping at other sites for more than fifty years, the congregation erected a grandiose new building at the foot of High Street (Martin Luther King Boulevard) in 1910. Following Bnai Jeshurun's move to Short Hills in 1968, that edifice was taken over by Hopewell Baptist Church.

Similar fate awaited other Newark synagogues as the city's Jewish population, which peaked at 80,000 before the 1967 Newark civil disturbances, became practically extinct. Today, only Avraham Shalom on Broadway, founded more than a century ago, remains. It is home to the Jewish Museum of New Jersey and a national historic site. African-American houses of worship in Newark began taking shape shortly after the



Trinity of St. Philip's Cathedral



Basilica of the Sacred Heart

Civil War. Clinton Memorial AME Zion, a Methodist church at 151 Broadway, was the only house of worship serving people of color until several members seceded and formed Bethany Baptist Church in 1870. Bethany became the first Baptist congregation in Newark founded by people of African descent.

First Baptist Peddie Memorial Church, 572 Broad Street, was built in 1888. Originally, its members were all white and mostly Scottish. Through the years it has become a multicultural church that now has members from twenty-three nations.

St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church was founded in 1905 by newly arrived immigrants. In 1924, the members moved to a large new building on High Street opposite Arts High School. Rev. George Spiridakis, who led the growth of the congregation, served as pastor from 1918-54, when he was succeeded by the Very Rev. James Aloupis, a familiar figure in the Newark community until his retirement in 2003.

The Moorish Science Temple of America, whose central belief was that African-Americans were descended from the Moroccan Empire, was founded in Newark in 1913 by Noble Drew Ali. The Nation of Islam is said to have developed from it.

Newark today is home to more than 300 houses of worship of all denominations including many small storefront operations. Its most stately edifice is the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, adjacent to Branch Brook Park, a magnificent structure that took nearly a century to plan and complete. It is the seat of the Archdiocese of Newark.



Old Bethany Baptist Church
(Courtesy of Bethany Baptist Church)

Dedication

This calendar details the religious history of Newark, New Jersey since its founding 350 years ago and pays tribute to many of the city's spiritual leaders who have gone on to their Heavenly rest. It is dedicated to two of my dearest friends in the ministry, the Rev. John H. Shorter, pastor of New Eden Baptist Church, and Msgr. John P. Hourihan, pastor of St. John's Church. Rev. Shorter, a mainstay of the Newark-North Jersey Black Churchmen in its early years, and I met nearly fifty years ago when I was invited to his church by my friend Miss Rhapsody, a charter member of New Eden. My friendship with Father John, who devoted himself to feeding the poor and homeless on a daily basis, developed during my days at The Star-Ledger. I also want to acknowledge the community service of the Rev. John G. Ragin, who led the rebuilding of St. Luke African Methodist Episcopalian (AME) Church following a 1981 fire. Although retired after more than a half-century in the pulpit, he still preaches occasionally.

Every effort has been made to be as inclusive as possible, a difficult challenge since so few Newark houses of worship have kept their own records or archives. Unfortunately, much of this history has been discarded or dismissed over the years, which makes this chronicle all the more important. Hopefully, it will serve as an invaluable resource to the members of these institutions as well as to future historians.

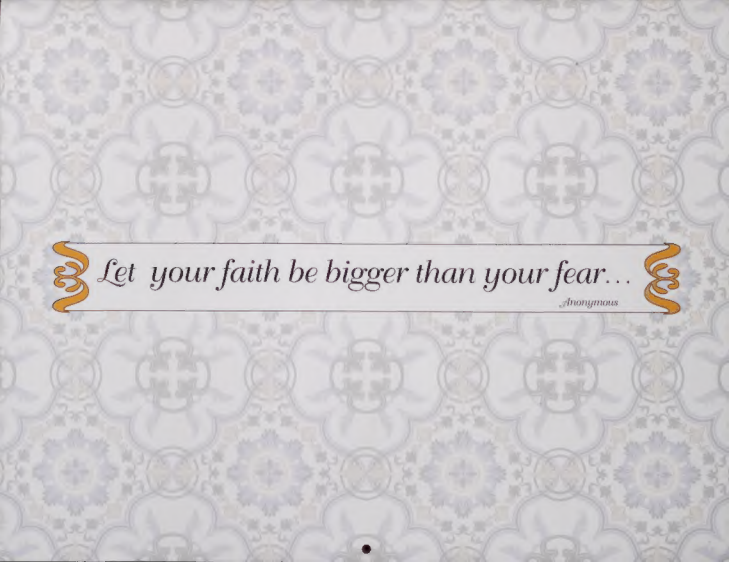
I want to thank Tom Anker of the Charles F. Cummings New Jersey Information Center at the Newark Public Library for his patience in assisting me. Thanks, too, to George Hawley, the center's director, and staff members Dale Colston, Beth Zak-Cohen and Liz Parker; Kathleen S. Dodds, Director of Special Collections at the Seton Hall University Library; religious leaders, church secretaries and members of various religious groups who assisted me, and my friend Alice Campisi O'Keefe, my sounding board for this work. Most of all, praise God!



Barbara J. Kukla spent forty-three years in journalism, most of it at The Star-Ledger, where she was the editor of the popular Newark This Week section of the paper for the better part of her career. She has written five books about the people of Newark, including Swing City: Newark Nightlife, 1925-50 and America's Music: Jazz in Newark. Previous calendars include Rejoice! Newark Gospel Greats and Faces and Places: A Century of Newark Jazz.

To schedule a talk by the author about the history of religion in Newark and its beloved religious leaders or to purchase calendars, **Contact (973) 325-3760 or Bjkukla@aol.com. Copies are \$15.00 each. Bulk rates are available.**

(Cover photographs: Rev. John H. Shorter and Msgr. John P. Hourihan)



Let your faith be bigger than your fear...

Anonymous